

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE SECTION

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IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM 1-800-722-4794.....Fax (909) 386-8325

TUBERCULOSIS CONTROL 1-800-722-4794.....Fax (909) 387-2861

EPIDEMIOLOGY 1-800-722-4794.....Fax (909) 386-8325

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For more information

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Health Educators, Immunization Program

1-800-722-4794

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MAY 2010

National Hepatitis Awareness Month Begins in May

May is National Hepatitis Awareness Month. Please join the County of San Bernardino Department of Public Health as we recognize this national awareness campaign. Hepatitis is a disease that harms the liver and is caused by several different viruses; the liver is an important organ of the body because it helps digest food, store energy, and remove poisons from the body. Hepatitis causes the liver to swell or inflame which stops it from working properly.

Hepatitis A, B, and C are the three most common types of viral hepatitis found in the United States. Hepatitis is a major public health concern in the United States and around the world because the disease is spread from person to person. Symptoms of hepatitis can include yellowing of the skin and/or eyes, nausea, diarrhea and vomiting, tiredness, pain in muscles, joints and stomach, and loss of appetite. The Immunization Program would like to share information on how county residents can protect themselves and prevent the spread of hepatitis to others.

Hepatitis A, B, and C are caused by separate viruses and spread to people in different ways:

- **Hepatitis A** is usually spread through contaminated food or water, which may be due to poor hand washing/personal cleanliness, but can also be spread through oral-anal sex with an infected person. **Vaccine is available to protect individuals against hepatitis A.**
- **Hepatitis B (and in some cases hepatitis C)** is spread through blood and bodily fluids when having unprotected sex with an infected person. **Vaccine is available to protect individuals against hepatitis B, but not hepatitis C.**
- **Hepatitis B and C** are spread by direct contact with blood when sharing needles (or other drug equipment) with an infected person, and can also be passed from an infected mother to her newborn child before or during birth.
- **Hepatitis B and C** may also be spread when sharing or coming in contact with personal objects such as razors or toothbrushes with someone who is infected.

Many people with hepatitis B or C do not know they are infected and/or have the disease. **Awareness is the first step in protecting yourself and others against hepatitis. If you are at risk or would like further information, contact your physician or local health department at 1-800-722-4794, Monday through Friday from 8 am – 5 pm to get vaccinated and protected.**

GREGORY C. DEVEREAUX
County Administrative Officer

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